

Abstract

Stanford-McIntyre, Sarah, "The Campus that Oil Built: Visualizing the University of Texas' Extractive Wealth in the age of the Corporate University," *Remaking the American College Campus*, Ed. Jonathan Silverman and Meghan Sweeney, Jefferson: McFarland, 2016.

A flagship public university that maintains the second largest endowment in the United States, the University of Texas (UT) owes much of its financial security to profitable oil-producing land in rural West Texas. The product of a fortuitous nineteenth-century land grant from the state, UT's participation in the oil industry dates back generations and at different periods has been a source of boastful pride and embarrassed reticence for the university administration.

In this essay I identify the tightrope on which the University of Texas balances an increasing dependence on private industry donors against its self-conscious branding efforts as Texas's politically neutral intellectual and cultural center. In particular, I document the oil industry's central roll in the development of the main Austin campus over the past century and argue that this historic connection set the stage for recent trends in university management. I argue that UT Austin's contemporary campus geography, defined steadily increasing enrollment, the constant development of new facilities, and centrality within a growing branch campus system, is a living memorial to the industry that first fueled its expansion.

UT, because of its oil industry ties, applied business growth models to its strategic planning efforts decades before this became common across the US. In the context of the contemporary debate over American public university management, I show that the university's recent expansion and fundraising projects stretch the limits of the university's mandate to foster intellectual freedom and provide for citizen education. Replacing these goals with neoliberal

principles and business ideology.